



Committee on International Justice and Peace

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 • 202-541-3160

WEBSITE: WWW.USCCB.ORG/JPHD • FAX 202-541-3339

February 3, 2020

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

President Trump's recently released "Peace to Prosperity" proposes a way forward to help resolve the decades old differences between the Israelis and Palestinians. Like so many attempts of the past decades, this merits serious consideration. There is much in this extensive proposal that needs to be examined and it is likely that some will find it substantially on target and many will not. In considering such a plan, a few fundamental truths need to be reiterated as the basis for much desired progress in negotiations.

First and foremost, the two principals - the Israelis and the Palestinians - are the only ones who can resolve the differences and agree on a common resolution to the chronic impasse. While acknowledging the significant role the United States plays, these principals must negotiate directly with each other with the support of the international community, that they may find a fair compromise, which takes into account the legitimate aspirations of the two peoples. With the Holy See, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has always encouraged and supported direct conversations between Palestine and Israel.

Second, the USCCB stands with the Holy See in continuing strong support for a two-state solution by the two principal actors. Our Conference is on record as supporting a two-state solution and "the right of the State of Israel to live in peace and security within the borders recognized by the international community. Equally that same right belongs to the Palestinian people, whose legitimate aspirations must be recognized, respected and implemented."
[\(Statement of the Holy See, November 20, 2019\)](#)

Intrinsic to a fruitful discussion is the necessity that each state recognizes and supports the legitimacy of each other. The future peace and flourishing of life in the Holy Land depend on such a mutual recognition that calls for concrete steps in mutual counsel and collaboration, before the fundamental agreements can be achieved. The United States and all other interested parties who offer their counsel and aid must do so as contributors to strengthen bilateral agreement between the two principal entities. As such, we are concerned 'Peace to Prosperity' makes propositions without these requisite conditions being met.

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Israelis and Palestinians have expressed concerns about real and perceived injustices from the other side. Honesty demands they be addressed and corrected but confidence building measures must take the place of mutual recriminations. The goal is twofold: the right both Israel and Palestine have to a state that is viable and that threats of violence and reprisal from the other cease. Israel has a right to her sovereignty with safe and secure borders. Palestine has a right to her sovereignty consistent with her legitimate aspirations for a homeland based on dignity and freedom.

The Catholic Church in the United States recognizes and supports the legitimate aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians to build their nation on the cultural, social and religious values that underpin their society. Equally, we Catholic bishops stand in union with our brother bishops of the Catholic and other Christian traditions in support of the freedoms that all religious groups have a right to enjoy.

In this land so precious to Jew, Christian and Muslim, the leadership of both nations must guarantee that freedom to exercise and profess our faith both by Christians resident in the two states and by pilgrims who need free access to the shrines and holy places so dear to our common traditions. Each year, the [Holy Land Coordination](#) brings together Catholic bishops from countries with historic ties to this sacred land allowing us to be consistently engaged firsthand with all parties who struggle to find peace and justice in this land they call home. We stand in solidarity with the Christian minorities of the Holy Land and all those who desire lasting peace in the region.

Finally, we ask as bishops of the United States that the good offices of our nation assist Israel and Palestine to travel the road of mutual recognition and mutual legitimacy to its intended goal. As Pope Francis declared when he visited Israel in 2014, ‘The two-state solution must become a reality and not merely a dream.’ We shall be one in our prayers that both Palestinians and Israelis be able to live side by side with sovereignty, dignity, and peace.”

With assurance of my prayers for you, I remain,

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ David J. Malloy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Most Reverend David J. Malloy
Bishop of Rockford
Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops